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ABSTRACT

This activities booklet focuses on the story of Alaska's state flag. The booklet is for use in teaching middle school students. Each activity contains: background information, a summary and time estimate, Alaska state standards, a step-by-step technique for classroom implementation of the activity, assessment tips, materials and resources needed, and a vocabulary. Activities included are: "Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag (What Should I Remember about Alaska's Flag?)"; "Meet the Researcher (Why Do People Research and Write Stories?)"; "Steps to Statehood (How Did a Flag Help Alaska Become a State?)"; "Symbols Tell a Story (What Is a Symbol?)"; and "Minting a Symbol for Alaska (What Is a Good Symbol for Alaska Today?)." Includes "Parts of the Catalog," two handouts, story cards, and a sample self-evaluation scoring guide. (BT)

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ED 477 903

Alaska State Museum

Eight Stars of Gold
The Story of Alaska's Flag

Middle School Activities
(Grades 6-8)

Alaska State Museum
395 Whittier Street
Juneau, AK 99801-1718

SO 035 016

http://www.museums.state.ak.us/EightStars/activities.html

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EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

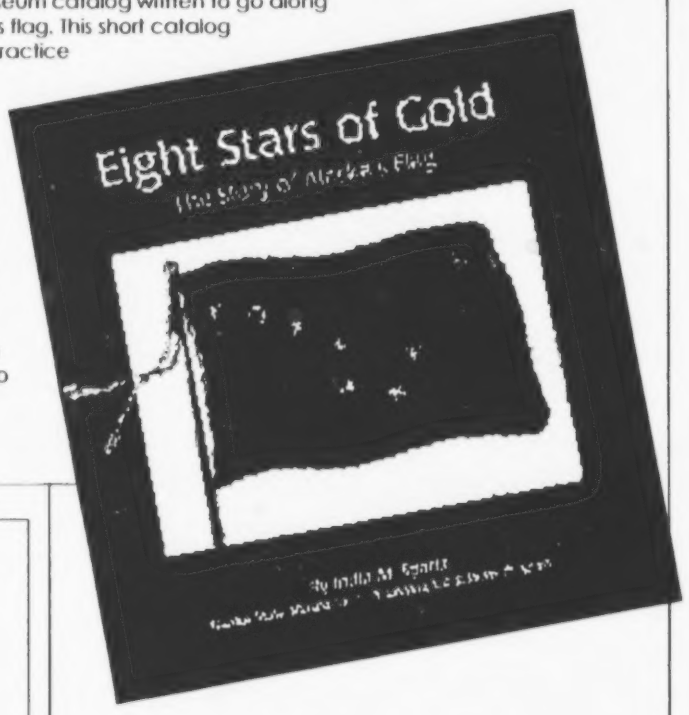
EIGHT STARS OF GOLD: THE STORY OF ALASKA'S FLAG

What should I remember about Alaska's flag?

Level: Middle School and above (grades 6-12)

Background

Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag is the museum catalog written to go along with an exhibit celebrating the 75th birthday of Alaska's flag. This short catalog gives students an excellent opportunity to learn and practice important content reading skills while learning historical facts about Alaska. The 24-page catalog is divided into an introduction, three sections, two short feature stories and a timeline. The author, India Spartz, uses historical photographs, original flag contest designs, poetry, and the state song to tell the fascinating story.



These activities focus primarily on summarization and the author's style and technique. Summarizing helps students put the essential ideas of a passage into a sentence or short statement in their own words. It is an important higher-level thinking skill, that enables one to distinguish the difference between main ideas and secondary details.

Summary

Students practice identifying and summarizing main ideas while reading the exhibit catalog about the history of Alaska's flag.

Estimated Time

Varies. If these are new skills, 120 minutes (4 sessions x 30 minutes)
If students already know how to summarize, 60 minutes (2 sessions x 30 minutes)

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 2

Reading

1a Use text structures such as illustrations, graphs, and headers to read and comprehend texts

Benchmark 3

Reading

3 Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text and connect new information or ideas to prior knowledge and experience

Alaska Content Standards

Government/Citizenship

A.1 Understand the necessity and purpose of government

A.3 Understand how nations organize their governments

Activities

Step One: Preview and practice

Tell the students that they are going to practice summarizing, a skill that helps them remember the most important ideas from this story and anything else they read. Tell them that they are going to begin by finding out how the author, India Spartz, organized the catalog to help readers find and remember the most important ideas.

Have students preview the catalog.
They should be able to locate:

- titles (blue titles on pages 5, 7, 8); sections with different colored pages or unique designs (yellow titles and purple background on pages 10-11, 13 and 20-21); photographs, sheet music, a painting (page 4), and timeline (gold color margins on pages 18-19).
- Tell the students that they should use all of these clues to help them locate and remember the most important ideas in the catalog.

- Practice summarizing. Students identify important facts from the following selection and rewrite them into a short sentence. Read silently, or together, the first paragraph:

  On October 18, 1867, the Alaska Purchase was finalized during a flag-raising ceremony in Sitka, Alaska between Russia and the United States. When the United States purchased Alaska, it was designated a military district. The Army, the Treasury, and finally the Navy administered its government activities, while Congress enacted legislation pertaining to Alaska. However, discussion of Alaska statehood began almost immediately when, in 1869, William H. Seward, former Secretary of State and architect of the Alaska Purchase, visited Sitka and proclaimed that Alaska would soon become a territory and eventually a state. Little did he know that statehood for Alaska would take another 89 years to achieve.

- Ask, "What are the important facts?" (Answers will vary but should include: 1867 purchase, military district, William Seward said Alaska would become a state, and that statehood took 89 years.)
- Ask students to put only the most important facts into one sentence. Encourage students to discuss how to decide what is important and what can be left out. (Example: It took 89 years after purchase for Alaska to become a state.)

Step Two: Read and summarize

- It may be helpful to work as a group or in small groups while they are learning and practicing summarization skills. Have students read the first section, "The Alaska Purchase and the steps toward statehood" (pp. 5-7). Ask them to make a list of the important facts they read, either by themselves or with the group. Their goal, after reading, will be to have one or two short sentences that include only the most important ideas from these pages.
- Facts can be put on a chart or the board. These facts may include:
  - Congress made poor laws for Alaska
  - Alaskans couldn't marry, have wills, buy property or get mining claims
  - Absentee businesses controlled government
  - Alaska had colonial status
  - First Organic Act 1884 made a crude government and court system
  - Alaska was a district
  - Governor Kinkead designed a district seal that included important things about Alaska
  - Second Organic Act in 1912 made Alaska a territory
  - Elected legislature had some power to make laws
- Students should read through the list of facts, choose the most important, and compose 1-2 sentences. (Example of a summary: The people of Alaska did not like being a district without the ability to make laws. In 1912 Alaska took the first step to statehood when it was made a territory.)
- Depending on the abilities of the students, have them work independently or in teams to write summaries for the rest of the catalog. (See *Parts of the Catalog* for a list.)

Step Three: Write and discuss

- Using the summary sentences from the students, work together to write a catalog summary. The catalog summary should be a short paragraph in the students' own words (no more than 10 sentences) that tells the most important facts about the catalog.
- Have the students discuss how the author's style helped them remember information. (Example answers: I knew where to look for information. The timeline listed most important facts.)

Assessments

- Give the students a paragraph at their reading levels and ask them to write a 1-2 sentence summary. Check for main ideas and clarity.
- Ask students to explain the steps that took Alaska to statehood using only their summary paragraph. If students are unable to explain the most important steps, they should review the text and consider adding more facts in their summary sentences.
- Students could do a short talk about the catalog for another class (such as 4th graders who study Alaska history) using only their summary paragraph as a guide.

Materials and Resources

- Parts of the catalog, handout
- Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag*. Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001.

Vocabulary

From Pages 10-11 for Benny Benson

amputate v. To cut off, especially by surgery
comical adj. Funny
revered v. To regard with deep respect, love
unanimous adj. In complete agreement
William Paul n. Alaskan Native leader and legislator

From Page 13 for Jesse Lee Mission Home
auspices n. Sponsorship
Bostonian n. A person from Boston
camouflaged n. Disguising to conceal from the enemy
epidemic n. Spreading rapidly among people, as a disease
habitation n. A dwelling; home
hospitalization n. To put in a hospital
Methodist Church n. A Protestant Christian church, developed by the teachings of John Wesley
tuberculosis n. An infectious disease characterized by small, rounded projections in the lungs

PARTS OF THE CATALOG

Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag

Pages	
1	Title page
2	Information page
3	Introduction by India Spartz, Guest Curator
5–7	The Alaska Purchase and the steps toward statehood
7–8	The 'Twilit Twenties' and the birth of Alaska's flag
8 –17	Benny Benson's winning design
10 –11	Feature: Benny Benson
13	Feature: Jesse Lee Mission Home
18 –19	Timeline
20 –21	List of Entries
22	Bibliography
23	Benny Benson Poem
8 –17	Benny Benson's winning design

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

MEET THE RESEARCHER

Why do people research and write stories?

Level: Middle School (grades 6-8)

Background

We all tell stories. We repeat stories we have heard, we make up stories for fun, and we piece together facts and opinions from many sources to make stories more interesting. India M. Spartz, who was born and raised in Juneau, researched and wrote *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag* because she was interested in the true story of Alaska's Flag.

Summary

Students discuss what goes into researching a story and then use the catalog *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag* and an interview with India Spartz to analyze the effectiveness of an author. Students research other authors and why they write books or articles.

Estimated Time

60 minutes + additional time to research other authors

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 3

Reading

1. Apply knowledge of words, determine meanings of new words to comprehend text

8b. Analyze an author's purpose and offer a critical opinion of the effectiveness of the text in meeting that purpose

Assessments

After the students have discussed whether or not the catalog supports the author's purpose, have them write a letter to India Spartz explaining their conclusions. Students may send their letters via email to India Spartz at: alaskaflag@yahoo.com

Activities

Step One: Introductions, vocabulary and predictions

Before students watch the India Spartz video, have them do two activities:

1. Investigate the meaning of words that will be used in the interview. Think of a synonym for the following words. Students may need to use a thesaurus. Encourage them to use just one word, not a phrase or definition. (See Vocabulary.)

archive	collaboration	conservator
curator	document *(verb)*	independence
misconstrued	official	researcher
significant	struggle	symbol

2. Use a prediction guide (a three-column graphic organizer) to help the students focus on the important ideas they will hear and read. Put the suggested questions, and any others you may want to add, in the center column. Have the students predict answers in column one, on the left, before the reading. (See Prediction Guide for Meet the Researcher.)

Step Two: Watch, read and discuss

- Watch the video of India Spartz on your CD or download it using RealPlayer from the Alaska State Museum website. Read page 3, Introduction, from *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag*.
- Ask the students to fill in as many of the answers as they can in column three on the Prediction Guide. Which answers were not found? How could one find the answers? Possible suggestions would be email, write, or call the author, or find another book written by the author.
- Ask the students to write a one or two sentence summary of the author's purpose for researching and writing

about Alaska's flag. Answers will vary. (Possible answer: India Spartz wanted to tell the important story about how Benny's flag design helped Alaska become a state.)

- Have the students brainstorm a list of things they might find in the exhibit catalog that could be called 'evidence' that the author accomplished her purpose. (These might include statements or photographs that Benny was considered important by important people, statements people made about what the flag meant to them, people saying they consider the flag important, etc.)
- Ask the students to read the catalog and locate evidence. Make a list together of the evidence found to support the author's purpose. Was she effective in meeting her purpose? Is there enough evidence? What else would the students want to see to convince them?

Step Three: Investigate author's purpose

- Ask the students to work in pairs or small groups to investigate other authors of non-fiction, including biography. Use the Internet, books in the classroom or library, or librarians to learn about why authors select the topics they write about. Prepare a class display about the discoveries they make about authors. Discuss with the class the importance of being motivated and having a clear purpose. (Many books have a statement from the author on the cover, in an introduction or preface, or at the end of the book. This is an excellent opportunity for students to explore parts of books that are frequently overlooked or just skimmed.)

Materials

- Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag.* Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001. Flag contest and rules: page 8, Other flag contest entries: pages 20-21
- Handout 1: Prediction Guide for Meet the Researcher
- Handout 2: Does the Text Match the Author's Purpose?

Resources

- CD-ROM: *Eight Stars of Gold*—India Spartz Interview
- Many publishers' websites have information about their authors. See: Scholastic, www2.scholastic.com/ or website for author Gary Paulson, www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/
- Email address to write to author India Spartz: alaskaflag@yahoo.com

Vocabulary

Write a synonym (similar) for the following words. Students may need to use a thesaurus. Encourage them to use one word, not a phrase or definition.

Possible Answers:
independence = self-government
struggle = fight
archive = library or collection
conservator = preservation specialist
curator = expert or care taker
symbol = emblem
document (as a verb) = record
misconstrued = misinterpreted or misunderstood
official = formal
collaboration = partnership
researcher = investigator
significant = important

HANDOUT 1: Prediction Guide for Meet the Researcher

Your ideas before the reading	Guiding questions	Your ideas & facts after reading the catalog and watching the video
	What is a researcher?	
	What skills does a good researcher need?	
	Why did India Spartz research the story of Alaska's Flag?	
	Where did she go to get support for the project?	
	Who hired her to do the research and write the catalog?	
	How important are pictures in telling this story?	
	How do you choose between what to put into a story and what to leave out?	
	How long did it take her to research and write this story?	

HANDOUT 2: Does the Text Match the Author's Purpose?

DIRECTIONS: Write a 1-2 sentence summary of what the author was trying to accomplish with this text. Think about what types of evidence you would need to conclude that the purpose was accomplished. (Examples: photographs, quotations from famous or credible people, etc.) Look for and document evidence in the text that helps convince you that the author achieved her purpose.

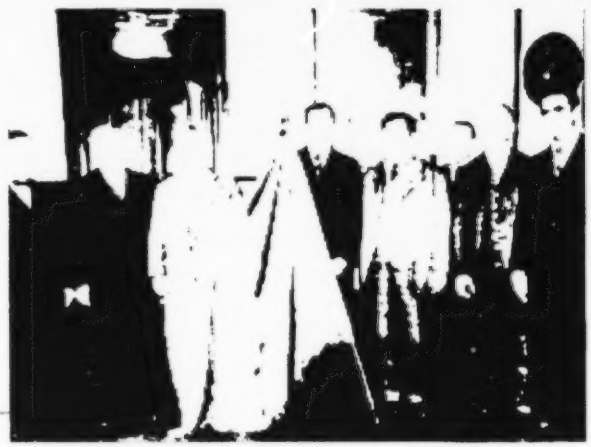
Summary: (What was the author's purpose for writing this book/article?)	
Examples that support the summary.	Where I found it in the text (page number)

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

STEPS TO STATEHOOD

How did a flag help Alaska become a state?

Level: Middle School (grades 6-8)
See "Techniques to Vary Reading" to adapt this activity for younger or older students.



Governor George A. Parks with the Alaska Flag in Washington, D.C., 1927

Summary

Students summarize and sequence the main ideas and supporting details from the exhibit catalog about the story of Alaska's flag and the statehood movement. They may then write a play or perform an animated readers theater with younger students. (See Benny Benson: The Boy Who Designed Alaska's Flag activity.)

Estimated Time

40 minutes – 240 minutes – varies depending on follow-up options

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 3

Reading

2 Rehearse and read texts aloud to an audience, in performances such as readers' theater, reading to younger students or peers, or as part of formal presentations including research reports and literature responses

3 Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text

Content Standards

History

B.2 Understand the people and the political, geographic, economic, cultural, social, and environmental events that have shaped the history of the state

Assessments

- Use the detailed story cards as a trivial pursuit or jeopardy game, where students are challenged to recall information.
- Take the dates off the story cards and ask students to correctly sequence the events.
- Have students select one part of the story and explain how important it was to the overall statehood movement. Students should be able to include details and references to other events.

Activities

Step One: Read and take notes

- Tell the students that they will be learning both the main ideas and details about Alaska's flag and how it helped Alaska to become a state.
- Divide the 20 story cards (main ideas) among your students. Tell them to find details about the item on the card they have, using the catalog *Eight Stars of Gold* or other available sources (almanacs, encyclopedias, books about Alaska, etc.) Students can write details directly on their cards, and should note their sources of information at the bottom of the card.

Step Two: Sequence and Discuss

- Have the students arrange themselves in the correct time sequence of the cards and read aloud the details they have found about each event. Save and use the cards for a 'trivial pursuit-type' game at a later date.
- Option: (Add 10 additional minutes) Print a set of the incomplete story cards for each student and have him/her add details to each story card while listening to their classmates. The teacher can demonstrate how to fill in the details on a large chart or overhead while each student reports.
- (2-3 sessions: 30 minutes each) Have the students use the detailed story cards to help them create a play or reader's theater for a specific audience. For example for primary students or parents, see Benny Benson: The Boy Who Designed Alaska's Flag activity.)
  1. Help the students identify the problems Alaska was facing before statehood (unable to govern, make laws, manage resources, etc.) and what the people decided the best solution would be (i.e. become a state).
  2. Help the students identify the characters/events that played a significant role in solving the problem. (Answers may include William Seward, Governor Parks, Benny Benson, Alaska Flag, poems, song, Territorial Legislature, or Constitutional Convention).

3. Help the students combine and/or skip certain story cards in order to tell the most significant or interesting parts of the story for a live audience.
4. In pairs or small groups, have them draft the play. After each pair or group finishes their part, have them get feedback on their writing from another pair or group. Revisions in writing should follow the feedback sessions. After all the pairs or groups have gotten feedback and finished their revisions, put all the parts of the play together into one reading. Decide who is going to play each character, and how the action will move from one event to another, such as entering and exiting the stage, using signs to note changes in dates, and blackouts in between scenes.
5. Provide time for the students to work in small groups, each group developing one part of the story. Create props, costumes, signs, etc., that help tell the story in a dramatic way. Practice the play or reader's theater so that the language and actions are appropriate and well timed.
6. Put on the play!

Materials

- Story cards (2 sets: Main idea cards, teacher set with answers)
- Techniques to Vary the Reading of a Book

Resources

Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag.* Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001.

Naske, Clause-M. and Slotnick, Herman E. *Alaska: A History of the 49th State,* Second Edition. University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. ISBN: 0-8061-2573-X

Reader's Theater
www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/langrt.htm

Vocabulary

auspices n. Sponsorship
Bostonian n. A person from Boston
camouflaged n. Disguising to conceal from the enemy
epidemic n. Spreading rapidly among people, as a disease
habitation n. A dwelling; home
hospitalization n. To put in a hospital
Methodist Church n. A Protestant Christian church, developed by the teachings of John Wesley
tuberculosis n. An infectious disease characterized by small, rounded projections in the lungs

TECHNIQUES TO VARY THE READING OF A BOOK

1. Students are assigned silent reading of the book or a section of the book.
2. The teacher reads the book to the class while they follow along in their own copies of the book.
3. The teacher guides the students through the silent reading of the book by posing questions for each section, having students make predictions, asking students to read to see if their predictions are correct, and then discussing whether their predictions were correct. (Stauffer, 1969)
4. Some students are assigned the silent reading of a section, with an independent activity for follow-up, while the teacher meets with the less mature readers and reads the section to them. The students may join in the reading when they want. The objective is for the less mature readers to enjoy the same story as the rest of the class with as much participation as they can handle at their reading level.
5. Students are assigned partners who share the reading.
6. Students are placed in cooperative groups of three to share the reading.
7. The story is taped and some students listen to the tape while others read it silently.
8. Students are assigned different sections of the book to read orally and are given time to prepare for expressive oral reading of the assigned section.
9. The teacher reads the section orally, while the class "mumble reads" it, which means they read along with the teacher while they underline the works with their fingers. The objective is to see the words and hear them from a fluent reader as well as hear themselves say them.
10. The teacher presents a vocabulary and concept lesson to help the students prepare for the section. The students are given a worksheet that guides them through the assigned reading by asking them key questions for various pages. The teacher circulates, helping individuals as necessary. Mature readers will read the entire story silently and then answer the questions, while the less mature readers will use the questions to help guide their reading. This is a perfect opportunity for the teacher to give more time to the less able readers. A challenge activity is given to those students who finish early.

STORY CARDS FOR EIGHT STARS OF GOLD: STEPS TO STATEHOOD

DIRECTIONS: The 20 story cards list the main ideas for the catalog. Cut out the story cards and give one to each student or pair of students. Have students fill in details about the event on their card by reading the catalog or other sources. Have students line up in the correct sequence and read their detailed cards.

OPTIONS: Print out a set of the incomplete story cards for each student to add the details supplied by their classmates; Create a play or Reader's Theatre for an audience using the cards as a script.

1867 Alaska Purchase	1869 William Seward visits Alaska
1884 First Organic Act	1884 District Seal created by Governor Kinkead
1910 Seal of Alaska revised	1912 Second Organic Act
1913 Benny Benson born	1916 Benny in Jesse Lee Home
1925 Jesse Lee Mission Home moves	1926 Governor Parks visits Washington D.C.

1927 Flag Contest held	May 1927 Benny wins flag contest
July 1927 First Alaska flag dedicated	Fall 1927 Poem *Alaska's Flag* written
1938 *Alaska's Flag* song	1956 *Alaska's Flag* becomes official song
1956 Alaska Constitution	1958 Statehood Bill passes
1959-January 3 Alaska becomes 49th state	1972 Benny dies

Visit the Alaska State Museum's website — www.museums.state.ak.us

TEACHER SET: Story Cards: Suggested answers and page numbers from exhibit catalog, *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag*, Alaska State Museum, 2001.	
1867 Alaska Purchase (page 5)	1869 William Seward visits Alaska. Seward was Secretary of State 1861–69, architect (designer) for the purchase of Alaska from Russia. He predicts Alaska will become a state. (page 5)
1884 First Organic Act – allowed for the first time local representation, with a crude civil government and court system set up. The U. S. President had the power to appoint a district governor to oversee Alaska (page 5)	1884 District Seal, the official symbol, created by first District Governor Kinkead. The seal showed Northern Lights, icebergs, and Alaska Natives. (page 6)
1910 Seal of Alaska is redesigned by Governor Clark showing importance of mining, agriculture, fisheries, fur seals and railroad (page 6)	1912 Second Organic Act is effected, improving self-government. Alaska becomes a Territory and is allowed to elect a territorial legislature with limited powers – first step to statehood. (page 6-7)
1913 Benny Benson is born in Chignik, in the Aleutians. His mother was Tatiana (Aleut-Russian), and his father's name was John Ben Benson (Swedish fisherman). (page 10)	1916 Mother died of pneumonia. 3-year old Benny placed by his father in Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska. (page 10)
1925 Governor George Parks is appointed. (page 7) Jesse Lee Mission Home moves to Seward by steamship. The children see trees, trains, automobiles, horses, and airplanes. (page 13)	1926 Governor Parks visits Washington D.C. He notices that Alaska isn't represented in rotunda of Post Office Building. (page 7)

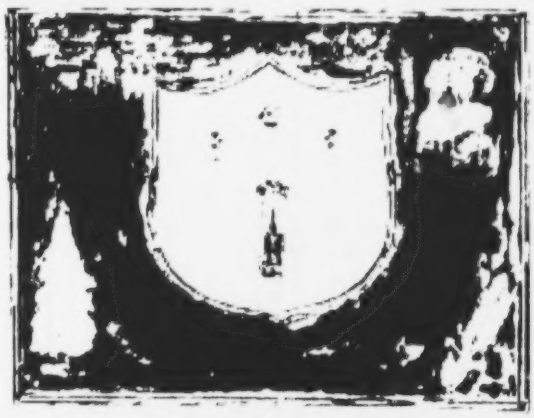
1927 Governor Parks calls for a flag contest; American Legion conducts contest, sets rules, judges, deadlines. (page 8)	May 1927 Benny creates flag design. (page 9 &10) Benny Benson's design wins, a "simple but meaningful design," "eight stars of gold on field of blue" "-blue of the forget-me-not flower," etc. (page 9 & 12)
July 1927 First Alaska Flag dedicated at Jesse Lee Mission Home in Seward; Benny awarded his gold watch, and $1,000 for his education. (page 14)	Fall 1927 Marie Drake writes a poem, *Alaska's Flag* (page 15)
1938 Elinor Dusenbury writes music to the poem *Alaska's Flag*, and creates the song that is a morale-booster for the citizens of the territory. (page 15)	1955 Territorial Legislature authorize Constitutional Convention, held in Fairbanks in November. Benny Benson is an invited guest. *Alaska's Flag* becomes official song. (page 16)
April 1956 Voters approve Constitution for Alaska that would take effect upon statehood. (page 16)	June 1958 Statehood bill passes Congress, June 30, 1958. (page 16)
January 1959 January 3 – Alaska admitted to Union as 49th state. (page 17)	1972 Benny dies of heart attack. He is honored in Alaska with streets, schools and monuments named for him to commemorate his remarkable contribution to the state. (page 11)
Visit the Alaska State Museum's website — www.museums.state.ak.us	

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

SYMBOLS TELL A STORY

What is a symbol?

Level: Middle School (grades 6-8)



Yvonne Arken's entry, Ketchikan, Alaska MS 14-1-4-90

Background

Flags have been part of history for over 5,000 years. The colors and symbols used on flags represent powerful ideas and can unite people who share common ideals. The Alaska State flag was designed by Benny Benson and was adopted as the state flag because it provided a much-needed symbol of strength and independence during the campaign for Alaska statehood. When studying history, we see that humans have always used symbols, usually with simple shapes, images and colors, to convey abstract ideas. Effective symbols can easily be understood by many people and across cultures. Learning how to understand the meaning of symbols can help students develop abstract thinking skills.

Summary

Students compare the symbols and designs found on the Alaska State flag with medieval heraldry flags or Alaska Native designs. They present to the class a personally meaningful image, using the vocabulary and symbolic meanings they have discovered through research.

Estimated Time

120 minutes

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 2

Reading

1. Apply knowledge of word origins, structure and context clues to determine meaning of new words and comprehend text

Writing

3. Use the conventions of standard English including grammar, sentence structure, paragraph structure, punctuation, spelling and usage in written work
5. List and document sources using a given format

Assessments

- Have the students use a scoring guide (see sample) to evaluate themselves after they have given their presentations.
- Have the students write a short explanation of what they could improve the next time they do a presentation.

Activity

Step One: Compare

- Ask the students what they already know about symbols. Use a two-column format to record the ideas, including both the symbolic object and what it stands for. (For example: blue can stand for sky; black can stand for night; cross can stand for a Christian religion; six-pointed star can stand for the Jewish religion, etc.)
- Look at Alaska's flag. What symbols did Benny Benson use and what did he believe they stood for? (See exhibit catalog, *Eight Stars of Gold*, pp. 9,15, back cover.) Discuss what other things the colors blue, gold and the Big Dipper might stand for.

Step Two: Research

- Have the students select and research symbols that have been used by cultures to represent something abstract. Choices might include medieval flags (called heraldry), flags used at sea, or Alaska Native art such as totems from Southeast Alaska or art designs used by Yup'ik artists on baskets or clothing. (See notes on totem design in Resources.)
- Have the students consider that a symbol may have different meanings, depending on the culture or time in history when it was used. Discuss possible reasons for the differences. Encourage the students to find as much information as possible about the symbol(s) they research.
- Brainstorm possible sources for research, such as, encyclopedias, books on symbols, Internet searches by a specific category such as totem meaning, heraldry symbols, books on flags, etc. Option: Consider having

a few students gather appropriate books and materials from the library or printed from the Internet and have them displayed and ready for the class to use.

- As a class, practice recording important information, including what the symbol is, its meaning, and the source of the information, i.e. website address, or book and page number. Practice using the dictionary to get the correct information about any word origins or etymology. Help the students locate the appropriate guides for decoding the abbreviations used. (EXAMPLE: star (star) n. [OE. steorra] , explain that OE. means from the Old English, source: *Webster's New World Dictionary*)
- Discuss and agree on one or two formats for students to use when they present what they learned to the class. For example, the students may create a drawing with symbols and a written paragraph that explains what they learned and why they selected particular symbols. Prepare a simple scoring guide or rubric that can be used to evaluate the presentation.
- Provide enough time for students to do their research and create and rehearse their presentation.

Step Three: Present and Display

- Depending on the format(s) selected for the presentations, provide enough time so that all of the students can share what they learned. If time is limited, consider using the "Gallery Walk" approach, where student work is hung on the wall as in an art gallery. The class members then circulate around the room where they can either use a checklist of things to look for at each display, or leave written comments on a piece of paper posted below each display.

Materials

- An Alaska flag, as large as possible
- Words to Alaska's flag song, (back cover of exhibit catalog)
- Scoring Guide (Sample of Student Self-evaluation)

Resources

Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag.* Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001.

Crampton, William. *Flag.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. ISBN 0-394-822255-2.The Eyewitness series provides clear information and photography to beautifully illustrate the topic. In this book students will discover the story of flags and banners close up – their history, their meanings, and how they are used.

Jeffries, David. *Flags.* New York: A Franklin Watts Library Edition, 1985. ISBN 0-531-100008-1 This easy-to-read fact book provides simple overviews and clear illustrations about the main topics in the study of flags.

Mayo, Gretchen Will. *Star Tales: North American Indian Stories About the Stars,* Illustrated by the author. New York: Walk & Co., 1987. 96 pp. Ages 8+. ISBN: 0-8027-6672-2

This is a folktale collection about the nighttime sky taken from many Northern United States and Canadian Indians. Each story has a carefully researched introduction concerning its origin. The tales are told with simplicity and humor.

Monroe, Jean Guard & Roy A. Williamson. *They Dance in the Sky.* Illustrated by Edgar Steward. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987. 130 pp. All Ages. ISBN: 0-395-39970-X Chapter two, "The Celestial Bear, Stories of the Big Dipper," is especially appropriate. It includes a collection of legends from various North American Indian cultures to explain the sky world. It also includes a bibliography, index and glossary. There are only a few stories from the Northwest.

Video

The Box of Daylight: A Tlingit Myth of Creation, Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 1990. 9 minutes. This beautifully narrated myth tells how Raven brought the stars, moon and sun to the people on earth. Using authentic masks and regalia, actors bring the myth to life.

"When you look at these totem poles, Chilkat blankets and carved wooden hats, do you wonder: Who made these? What are they used for? What do they mean to the people who made them? To my people, the Tlingit Natives of Alaska they record the history of our families and tribes. They document our relationship with the land, with the fish, with the game that has sustained us throughout the ages. When we wear them and put them in our houses they tell people who we are, what is our lineage. They give us self-respect. They are more like the coats of arms of the noble families of Great Britain than the paintings of Picasso or sculpture of Michelangeo."

–from the introduction by Walter Porter

Vocabulary

Symbol n. An object used to represent something abstract

Sample Scoring Guide for Self-evaluation

- Did you do your best work?
- Did you work hard, enjoy the project, and feel good about what you completed?
- Did you work well with your teammates? What did you contribute to the team effort? Did you do your fair share of work?
- Did you communicate clearly? Did your audience seem to understand your main points?
- Was your presentation well organized?

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

MINTING A SYMBOL FOR ALASKA

What is a good symbol for Alaska today?

Level: Middle School (grades 6-8)

Background

In 1997 Public Law 105-124 authorized the U.S. Mint to initiate a national program "to provide for a 10-year circulating commemorative coin program to commemorate each of the 50 States." The short title for this law is the 50 States Commemorative Coin Program Act.

Seal of the territory of Alaska
Courtesy: Alaska State Archives

Summary

Students create a narrative and graphic design that represents modern Alaska. They may then enter it in the statewide competition for the upcoming "Alaska" quarter, as part of the U.S. Mint's 50 State Quarters Program.

Estimated Time

90 minutes + homework or silent reading time (15 minutes)

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Content Standards

Arts

- A.1. Participate in the visual arts
- A.4. Demonstrate creativity and imagination for innovative thinking
- C.1. Know criteria used to evaluate the arts, including craftsmanship, function, organization, originality, technique, theme
- C.3. Accept and offer constructive criticism
- D. 2. Discuss what makes an object a work of art

English/Language Arts

- A.4. Write well to inform, and clarify thinking
- B.1. Comprehend meaning from written text and visual information

Assessment

Ask students to write a short reflective piece "What have you learned about strong graphic designs?"

Activities

Step One: Read and recall

- Have students read page 8 from the exhibit catalog as a homework assignment, or as a silent reading task, and be ready to discuss the flag contest.
- Ask the students to recall all that they know about the rules of the contest that Benny entered in 1927.
- Ask students who have entered contests in the past (e.g. bookmark or poster contests) to share what that experience was like, what they remember about it.

Part Two: Design a coin and explain it

- Introduce the contemporary contest for the design of the Alaska quarter. Consult the U.S. Mint Internet site, www.usmint.gov. (Go to 50 states commemorative quarters program.)
- Read aloud and/or print off the description of the State Quarters program so that students become familiar with the program and why it exists. Show samples of some of the new state quarters, minted over the last four years, for the students to examine. Have the students check the US mint website and figure out which states' quarters will be released next.
- Print and copy for the class the "Design Criteria," which outline the quarter contest rules. A key concept for the program is that designs are meant to "*honor the unique history, traditions and symbols*" of the states.
- Read (or have students read) the contest rules. Go over the criteria for the design selection (e.g., that the flag design may NOT be used for the quarter), listing them again on the board as a reminder.

- Brainstorm ideas about what makes a strong design (design elements of balance, proportion, etc.) and what symbols might represent Alaska today.
- From the website, explain the process that is in place for the selection of each quarter. Have the students figure out when the Alaska quarter will be minted and when the governor must decide on a process. Ask them who they think would be a good liaison with the U.S. Mint to decide on the state's selection process. Brainstorm ideas about how the state's design could be selected.
- After discussion and the recording of ideas, ask each student to draft a design for the reverse side of the quarter.
- Each student then gets feedback on his/her design from one other student, in terms of the design elements the class has already identified.
- Each student should have the opportunity to revise his/her design after receiving feedback from peers.
- Each student should write a narrative that describes the design and what it represents. The writing should be focused on fulfilling the design criteria.

Part Three: Display and evaluate designs

- Display the designs and have the class (and others, if desired) vote on the top 3 or 4 designs, given the contest criteria and the class's list of design elements.
- Prepare the finalists for submission to the state contest .

Extension Activity

Have the students write a letter to the Governor, suggesting a fair process for selection of the design for the Alaska quarter.

Materials

- Drawing paper
- Pencils, pens, perhaps fine point markers
- Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag.* Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001. Page 8

Resources

US Mint: www.usmint.gov./mint_programs/50sq_program/index.cfm?action=criteria

Design Criteria for 50 States Commemorative Coin Program

The 50 States Commemorative Coin Program Act provides for designs to be submitted in accordance with the design selection and approval process developed by and in sole discretion of the Treasury Secretary. Because it is important that the nation's coinage and currency bear dignified designs of which the citizens of the United States can be proud, the Act further requires that the Secretary shall not select any frivolous or inappropriate design and no head-and-shoulders portrait or bust of any person, living or dead, and no portrait of a living person may be included in the design.

Guidelines for submission

- Designs shall maintain a dignity befitting the nation's coinage.
- Designs shall have broad appeal to the citizens of the state and avoid controversial subjects or symbols that are likely to offend.
- Suitable subject matter for design concepts include state landmarks (natural and man-made), landscapes, historically significant buildings, symbols of state resources or industries, official state flora and fauna, state icons (e.g., Texas Lone Star, Wyoming bronco, etc.), and outlines of the state.
- State flags and state seals are not considered suitable for designs.
- Consistent with the authorizing legislation, the states are encouraged to submit concepts that promote the diffusion of knowledge among the youth of the United States about the state, its history and geography, and the rich diversity of our national heritage.
- Priority consideration will be given to designs and concepts that are enduring representations of the state. Coins have a commercial life span of at least 30 years and are collected for generations.
- Inappropriate design concepts include, but are not limited to, logos or depictions of specific commercial, private, educational, civic, religious, sports, or other organizations whose membership or ownership is not universal.
- The United States Mint's current position is to accept text only descriptions of each State's design concept. Actual drawings and depictions will be rendered by the United States Mint.

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